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ABSTRACT

A field investigation of 32 groups of communally reared children utilizing 10 categories of group behavior reported group behavior forms and child socialization in groups of toddlers and preschoolers 18 months to 42 months of age. The groups were equally divided (16 each) among "total" and "day care" types and were age-homogeneous. Group forms were grouping, monitoring, imitation, affective responses to others, object transactions, helping, norm behaviors, importance establishing, organizing and boundary behaviors. Monitoring, grouping, organizing and norming showed direct age changes but degree and kind of contact influenced grouping as well as imitation and object transaction. Helping, boundary behaviors, affective responses and establishing importance were infrequent in our observations. Some group interactions were found to be more facilitative of socialization at earlier ages than is generally thought likely. It is suggested that group forms could be employed as socialization criteria for social development and as diagnostic aids. Further study should chart one or two group forms over a greater developmental span. (Author)

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Group Behavior and Social Development Among Young Children*

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While we would probably all agree that socialization of children takes place first in the home and later in the peer group, the point in time that the peer group becomes important for socialization would no doubt be open to debate. Traditionally psychologists have tended to date peer group influence with beginning school experiences. Of late there have been social changes which call attention to earlier peer group influences. Some children in many societies spend a good deal of time in group settings almost from birth. The responsibility for providing optimal experiences for groups of very young children away from home during the greater portion of a working day has sensitized child care workers to the group setting itself. Much attention has been devoted to physical space, child-caretaker ratio, equipment, stimulation, etc. This paper addresses itself to the question: what do we know about children's behavior in groups which could offer guidance in the planning of group settings for young children?

We know that while groups vary in terms of size, and structure of program they can become social support systems and vehicles of socialization for the individual provided that the child is capable of responding to the implicit social demands of the group situation.

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There is increasing evidence that even young children can consider the intentions of peers and take those intentions into account (Surber, 1977) and that early on, children everywhere come to understand and abide by a norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). The mutual emotional responsiveness observed in very young infants (Simner, 1971) alerts us to the social influence potential that peer groups may have for the very young. While it is widely acknowledged that peer influence exercises increasing power with age and growth, it seems from a number of studies that in fact it can be a strong socializing force at a younger age than hiterto thought likely. (Moore & Updegraf, 1964).

The group provides other experiences from those of the home. The children's group offers the opportunity to experiment with role behavior, to initiate activities, to observe and to imitate peers. It offers children an opportunity to belong and to learn the rules of belonging. In group settings children can successfully exert leadership only by demonstrating sensitivity to group norms and individual feelings (Merei, 1949).

We have noted that group participation provides socialization opportunities, but it also makes certain demands upon the child. Group membership requirements are based on developing social skills which influence whether or not the child succeeds in achieving integration with his peers. In our field study of young children in Israeli collective settlements we were able to notice the <u>emergence</u> of the following individual capacities as they affected group behaviors.

(1) The capacity to adhere to implicit and explicit group codes, rules, or regulations.

(2) The capacity to elicit positive attention from others, as well as approval or support.

(3) The capacity to reciprocate and give positive attention, approval, and support to others.

(4) The capacity to become interested and involved in the interactions of others.

(5) The capacity to imitate others and to learn social as well as instrumental behaviors as a consequence.

(6) The capacity to negotiate the sharing and/or apportionment of play objects.

(7) The capacity to "read" others' emotional needs, to respond to their needs, and to express one's own.

(8) The capacity to yield as well as to dominate; to follow as well as to lead.

(9) The capacity to undertake roles that are important to the group's maintenance.

(10) The capacity to tolerate subgrouping and occasional exclusion and to identify as a group member toward "outsiders."

To what extent are these group behavior goals and social skills attainable by young children? Actually, quite complex group behaviors are typically learned by average children during their developing years. What is the process by which they are learned? When do these capacities become available to children, and under what conditions? These questions remain to be answered.[4]

Our own field investigation supports the hypothesis of early emergence

of group behaviors as do the observations of Freud and Dann (1951) Irvine (1952 and 1966) Faigin (1958) Rabin (1965) and Spiro (1965). However, as we shall point out, one cannot anticipate a smooth and orderly sequencing of group behaviors, nor is emergent group behavior independent of social setting effects.

Let me briefly summarize the study we did so that I may describe for you the main elements of our continuing interest in group and social development. Our planning had been influenced by our own field observations of young children aged $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$ in Kibbutz settings, and by observations of groups of preschoolers in the U. S. We were also impressed by earlier anecdotol accounts and more systematic studies which concluded that children as young as 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ could be "aware" of their group contexts and of its members (Faigin, 1958).

Among psychologists awareness of the Kibbutz as a social form with its' philosophy of communal childrearing is widespread. We chose the Kibbutz children's house as a naturalistic setting for our investigation because of its' group optimizing properties. Despite a strong family-focus, Kibbutz children have earlier and more consistent opportunities for extensive peer relationships under benign supervision in small living units that any other population samples we had access to.

We observed 32 groups of children in living units of 4 and 5. These children were equally divided (16 groups each) among two types of communal settlement, One (A), was a more traditional "total" environment for children including night-time sleeping. The second (B) had instituted a sleeping-at-home with family arrangement. We called the latter, the "Day-Care" group

since it resembled in some sense the functional patterning of the daily schedule in households where mothers work and children are cared for in Day Care Centers. Differences should not be overlooked, however, between the Kibbutz Children's house with its group of 4 or 5 children within easy access of both parents and the average Day Care Center.

Our observations took place in the morning, after breakfast, when the children were "on their own" while the caretaker busied herself with housekeeping chores. Behavior segments were coded for the entire group in 30 second segments. Two observers shared the task. Each group was observed twice, once by each observer, and each observation period yielded twenty segments.

Target behaviors were defined and operationalized over a long period of our own systematic observations. The ones you see before you in the "handout" are the product of a number of revisions - and not the <u>end</u> product - for we are constantly reviewing and reconsidering the meaningfulness and the stability of these dimensions of group behavior, particularly as we ascend the age developmental ladder.

In today's presentation, I would like to discuss the dimensions of group behavior which we employed for the study of young children's groups. These group behavior categories have been modified and adapted for group observations of older individuals as well. You have before you a brief description of each of the 10 group behaviors upon which we focussed. To be sure they were not <u>all</u> observable on a given observation occasion. But they did occur with sufficient frequency that we came to regard them as common group events. They are the following:

Grouping, monitoring, imitation, affective responsiveness to others, object transactions, helping, norm behaviors, importance establishing, organizing, and boundary behaviors. Bear in mind that these were coded as they occurred. Grouping was the single category that was coded in each observation segment. Coders typically coded 3-4 group behaviors each segment.

1. Grouping:

Belonging and group acceptance are powerful motivators throughout the life span. Societies have long used exile, ostracism or banishment as punishment for trasgressions against the state. Preschool teachers too know that brief exclusions from the group provide effective displinary measures for "disturbers of the peace" at group-time. In our young groups we measured grouping behavior by coding physical proximity, visual engagement and verbal utterances (i.e., "we" statements). Grouping was rated as 1. detached, 2. parallel, 3. pairing, 4. clustering, 5. whole group.

2. Monitoring

The concept of monitoring grew from our impression of the amount and quality of children's staring and watching activities. Typically, intense monitoring of child-child interactions is an index of social interest and involvement in peers. In most societies the more obvious signs of monitoring are inhibited with socialization. However, having "eyed" each other at the beginning of this conference, we adults know the tendency continues to exist. Monitoring of others does express some kind of social involvement interest or concern.

3. Imitation

There is a rich literature on imitation and observational learning. Children are known to imitate models who are positively reinforced for their beha-

vior. Among young children, the urge to imitate peers exerts a strong cohesive influence. Indeed peers reinforce each other by imitation. Early social engagement frequently involved an invitation to another child to imitate or follow.

One form of imitation impressed us as much as it distressed caretakers. We termed the behavior "mass action"; it was a form of noisy contagion, explosive and undisciplined in nature, and clearly at variance with the caretaker's wish for order and tranquility. These contaged imitations seem to have a group bonding effect such that an individual child may feel caught up in their intensity and incapable of self detachment. I recall a $2\frac{1}{2}$ year old girl who burst into tears as her group chanting reached a crescendo in rythmic stamping-and-shouting of birthday, birthday!, birthday! What had started as a friendly birthday party had turned ominous for her. Later she confessed "I was so nervous!"

4. Affective Responsiveness to Interactions

Strong shared feelings cement group identification. We looked for manifestations of this kind of affective sharing among the very young. Giggling together, affectionate hugging, and expressions of concern when others cry were all observed. One recurrent indicator for a shared feeling life went uncoded in our study though we could not fail to notice it. It was an interaction which we called "the movie." In this interaction a mother returning a child to the children's house after an outing (these took place every day), would engage in leave-taking behavior. The last kiss, and the last wave "good-bye" and the promise to "come back" completely absorbed the child's peers who would stop everything to monitor, until parting accomplished, the returning child began to play again and normal activity resumed.

Object Transaction (Negotiation)

Any society must develop orderly ways of apportioning the use of its valued objects. In a children's group such objects are toys and playthings. Many interactions in the group centered around giving, getting, and negotiating over the use of these objects. Because young children find it difficult to delay gratification, conflict over control and possession of valued objects becomes a major source of quarreling. In communal settlements the problem is to some extent anticipated by providing, so far is possible, multiples of favored toys. However, this strategy did not prevent conflict, leading us to speculate that the object-in-use rather than the object per se is most attractive. Struggles over objects were subjects of quarrels among our $1\frac{1}{2}$ year olds. The development of language helped, of course, to facilitate object transactions although, verbal negotiation was frequently employed to justify or rationalize appropriation by force. The movement developmentally is toward increased verbal negotiation in the search for more stable and less disruptive ways of controlling objects and relationships.

Helping

Adults foster helping behaviors through praise and encouragement but young children receive little peer reinforcement for helping. Two-year-olds do not acknowledge help of age-mates with signs of gratitude. Indeed, some efforts at helping are rebuffed as interference. Other researchers have pointed to the rarity of helping behaviors among 3-4 year olds. (Staub, 1971, and Hoffman, 1970). Helping was rarely coded by our observers for ages $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$, yet we saw instances which we considered to have a group building effect. We shall be concerned to trace its relative frequency in later

childhood and in adult group behaviors.

Norms

Normative behavior on the part of individuals implies an awareness of group rules and customary ways of behaving. Norm awareness was apparent among our youngest subjects. At the preverbal level it took the form of being disturbed by and calling attention to non-normative behavior (i.e., a child wandering away from the group on their daily walk).

Older children (from 2 on) took pleasure in reminding each other of well-established norms. Visitors (like ourselves) were always reminded if we mistakenly sat in the wrong chair.

Importance Establishing

Attention from adult caretakers is an important reinforcer for small children. The process whereby peer attention becomes important accelerates with the capacities of age-mates to gratify social needs. From whatever source, the need to be seen and recognized is a social imperative for almost everyone. Such recognition is essentially confirming of one's importance, status, significance, etc. Adults are relatively predictable sources of attention and recognition. Peers are more variable and sometimes the more one demands, the less one gets. Eventually most children learn what it takes, but not without painful rebuffs. One child's bid for recognition generally stimulates a similar bid from an opposing quarter. Eventually the opposition is included in the initial claim; i.e., "See how big I am!" is transformed into "I'm bigger than you!"--thus the beginnings of the classic "put-down."

Organization

For young children, the structuring of activities is usually done by the

adult caretaker. In free play, however, without adult supervision, we observed instances of organizing initiatives among our youngest subjects. For an initiative to become an organizing event it was necessary that the initiative be reinforced by a peer. As we expected, organization was associated with language development, depending as it does upon communication to sustain connectedness and to subordinate competing impulses. In their play, young children experiment with making things happen and with influencing others to do what one wants.

Boundary Behaviors

As the term implies, boundary behaviors, whether verbal or nonverbal, circumscribe and define the group by inclusion and exclusion. They are most frequently alluded to or acted out in the presence of outsiders. The outsider may be perceived as a source of threat--as someone who could change or disrupt the play activity or interfere with the interactive pattern of the players. Boundaries vary in their relative permeability, and children vary in their ability to manipulate a boundary situation. Some socially skillful children appear to know how to "fit in" to ongoing play activity without arousing negative or boundary defensive reactions in others. In our observations, the beginnings of such perceptiveness and boundary manipulation skills could be seen among 2-1/2 - 3-1/2-year-olds.

Intergroup boundaries were most apparent when two separate groups of children would meet. In one kibbutz, this occurred at a jointly-used wading pool. Caretakers made efforts to reduce competition and wariness, but there was a define "we-they" dichotomy between the groups.

As adult outsiders, we were the objects of surveillance as we approached

the gate to a fenced-in play yard. We were invariably interrogated by one of the children while the others stopped to monitor. We were asked, "Who did you come to see?" or "Why are you here?"

Results and Conclusions

In this presentation I have stressed the group behavior categories which we have devised to study group behavior among very young children. I have emphasized the categories over the preliminary results because we believe they will be useful for further investigations of group behavior over the life span. I have outlined our field study design and will now briefly summarize the results. A more thorough description of this research will appear in a forth-coming issue of the International Journal of Behavioral Development.

As can be seen in Table 2, Monitoring was highest at 1-1/2 - 2-1/2 years and declined steadily thereafter. Initiating behaviors (organizing) increased steadily from 1-1/2 to 3-1/2 years of age, with a sharp increase at age 2-1/2. Helping behavior, while infrequent, showed increments from 2 years of age. Norming became active at 2-1/2, increasing gradually from that point.

With respect to Grouping, Table 1 shows that detached behavior declined most between ages 1-1/2 - 2. By 2 years of age, children were in parallel play for the most part with some pairing and clustering. Between 2-1/2 and 3-1/2 there was an increase in pairing and clustering behaviors. During the latter age, a setting effect on grouping becomes apparent as well. So called "Day Care" children appeared to pair more at 2-1/2 to 3 years and to cluster more between 2-1/2 - 3-1/2 than same-age children in the total care situation. Total care children, while showing the same general trend, continued high in

parallel play.

Table 3 reveals setting effects for imitation and for object transactions as well, with more of these activities scored for the Day Care setting than the total care setting. Overall, the frequency of object transactions appears to decrease in this study from age 1-1/2 to 3-1/2. To understand this, one needs to bear in mind that conflict over objects is more apparent at the younger age and would tend to be coded, whereas more subtle object negotiations may simply have been less obvious to observers.

With respect to setting, apart from the total time spent together, one needs to consider that though both groups were observed in free play after breakfast, the children returning from parental homes were playing together for the first time in a given day, while the children who slept in the children's house had interacted for quite a while before breakfast. This may, in part, account for more parallel play, less object transaction and imitation in the latter setting.

Our field study observations reveal helping, affective responses, boundary behaviors and establishing importance as infrequent in occurrence, while caretaker interview data suggest that these behaviors were frequently observed by the caretakers over the same age span. How do we take account of this difference? We might conclude that the conditions of observation were too difficult, i.e., the whole group had to be rated in the time allotted, or that though present, these behaviors do not occur with sufficient frequency to be reliably counted in two, one-hour segments. In any case, we feel that the next stage of investigation should take the categories of group behavior one or two at a time and chart their occurrence over a longer time span.

This study points toward utilizing these dimensions of group behavior to consider age developmental and social influence patterns in different group environments. A current expression of this effort is an exploratory study by one of our students who concentrated on one group category: Importance Establishing. Daniel Bronfin observed 3, 4, and 5-year-old children in a U.S.A. preschool setting. With age, he found both increasing inclination and skill in obtaining recognition from peers rather than from adult caretakers. He noted differences in content and style, as well as in focus. He found that children moved from unsubstantiated to substantiated claims for recognition. At age 3 attempts at gaining importance with peers might have little to do with the interests or inclinations of the person addressed, whereas with experience children could successfully convince others that their claims to importance were valid. Bronfin noted that by five children were no longer able to rely on four-year-old bravado but had to convincingly justify and support claims to peer attention. Translating Bronfin's effort into future applications (assuming, of course, systematic and controlled replications of such efforts and their ultimate validation) we might be able to say of a given five-year-old, "His efforts at establishing importance are stuck at a three-year-old level. How may we work to upgrade his social skills in this area?"

Can practice in peer groups accelerate and enhance the social skills needed for age-appropriate behavior in groups? This line of reasoning informs Oden and Asher's (1977) efforts to coach children to improve their peer-directed social strategies. Coaching children in the getting and giving of attention, support, and stimulation during play may build these skills essential to functioning in group situations.

Future investigations might extend the age-developmental span to be studied into later childhood and adulthood. If this could be done systematically, it would be possible to develop group behavior profiles for individual children so as to assess and keep abreast of their group membership capacities and skills. The method of "field study" of group processes should be useful in documenting age and social setting influences on group behaviors. From an application viewpoint, this approach may yield better strategies for helpful educational or therapeutic interventions.

In summary, this presentation has focussed upon the salience of some group interactions as facilitative of certain social responses at earlier ages than is generally considered likely. The point of this presentation is that there is much to be learned about socialization in young children from observing their ordinary group interactions. The group classifications described here are useful insofar as they suggest that group behavior indices--group forms--could be employed as socialization criteria for the study of social development and as diagnostic aids in helping children integrate with their peers.

Group Behavior and Socialization

Group Forms in Brief

Musia G. Lakin

1. Grouping: Spatial relations among individuals, detached parallel, pairing and clustering.
2. Monitoring: Watching the interactions of other group members with each other.
3. Imitation: Copying of another individual's behavior or mimicking a collective action.
4. Affective responsiveness to others: Positive or negative emotional reactions to others' emotional states.
5. Object transactions (negotiations) with others: Manner of getting and/or giving or sharing objects such as play materials.
6. Helping age-mates: Behaviors which benefit a peer-recipient but which result in no direct advantage to the helper.
7. Norm actions: Citing standards of behavior, rule-making, evaluations of others and prescriptive comments.
8. Importance establishing with peers: Bid for recognition, claims for attention.
9. Organizing initiatives: Attempts to lead, to influence, to assign roles or functions to others.
10. Boundary behaviors: Selective including and excluding behaviors towards others.

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Table 1

Average Frequency of the Four Categories of Group Structuring (Grouping) as a Function of Age and Setting (Significant Effects for each Category are Presented in the Lower Part of the Table)*

	DETACHED			PARALLEL			PAIRING			CLUSTERING		
Ages	Total Care	Day Care	$\bar{X}$	Total Care	Day Care	$\bar{X}$	Total Care	Day Care	$\bar{X}$	Total Care	Day Care	$\bar{X}$
1½-2	18.41	12.50	15.45	16.81	21.00	18.91	3.59	3.12	3.35	0.89	1.87	1.38
2-2½	8.74	7.94	8.34	20.37	21.39	20.88	6.05	5.33	5.69	4.10	4.39	4.24
2½-3	8.31	8.00	8.15	21.19	17.95	19.57	5.37	7.31	6.34	3.52	5.21	4.41
3-3½	4.44	7.55	5.99	19.67	14.11	16.89	6.78	5.78	6.28	4.33	9.11	6.72
$\Sigma\bar{X}$	39.90	35.99	37.93	78.05	74.45	76.25	21.79	21.54	21.66	12.84	20.56	16.75
Significant Effects	F age = 18.96 $p<.001$ F age x setting = 3.83, $p<.01$			F age = 3.37 $p<.02$ F age x setting = 5.56, $p<.001$			F age = 5.89 $p<.001$			F age = 17.40 $p<.001$ F setting = 13.63 $p<.001$ F age x setting = 3.72, $p<.02$		

*In this as in all subsequent tables df for setting effects = 1, 133; for age effects and for the age by setting interactions df = 3,133.

Table 2

Significant Age-Related Changes in the Average Frequencies of Group Interactive Behaviors

Dimension	Organization Behav.	Norm. Behav.	Monitoring Behav.	Object Trans. Behav.	Helping Behav.
Ages	X	X	X	X	X
1½-2	.75	.10	8.65	3.14	1.34
2-2½	1.87	.70	6.51	2.77	2.68
2½-3	3.15	1.15	6.38	3.30	2.68
3-3½	7.05	1.28	4.41	2.11	2.13
	$F = 30.96$	$F = 6.81$	$F = 9.94$	$F_{age} = 2.36$	$F_{age} = 2.84$
	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p < .07$	$p < .04$
				$F_{setting} = 4.74$	
				$p < .03$	

Table 3

The Significant Effects of Setting on the Frequencies of Group Behaviors (Disregarding Age)

	Object Transactions	Imitation
Total Care	9.80	6.17
Day Care	12.85	8.32
	F=4.74	F =4.42
	p<.03	p<.04